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Mus 290.120

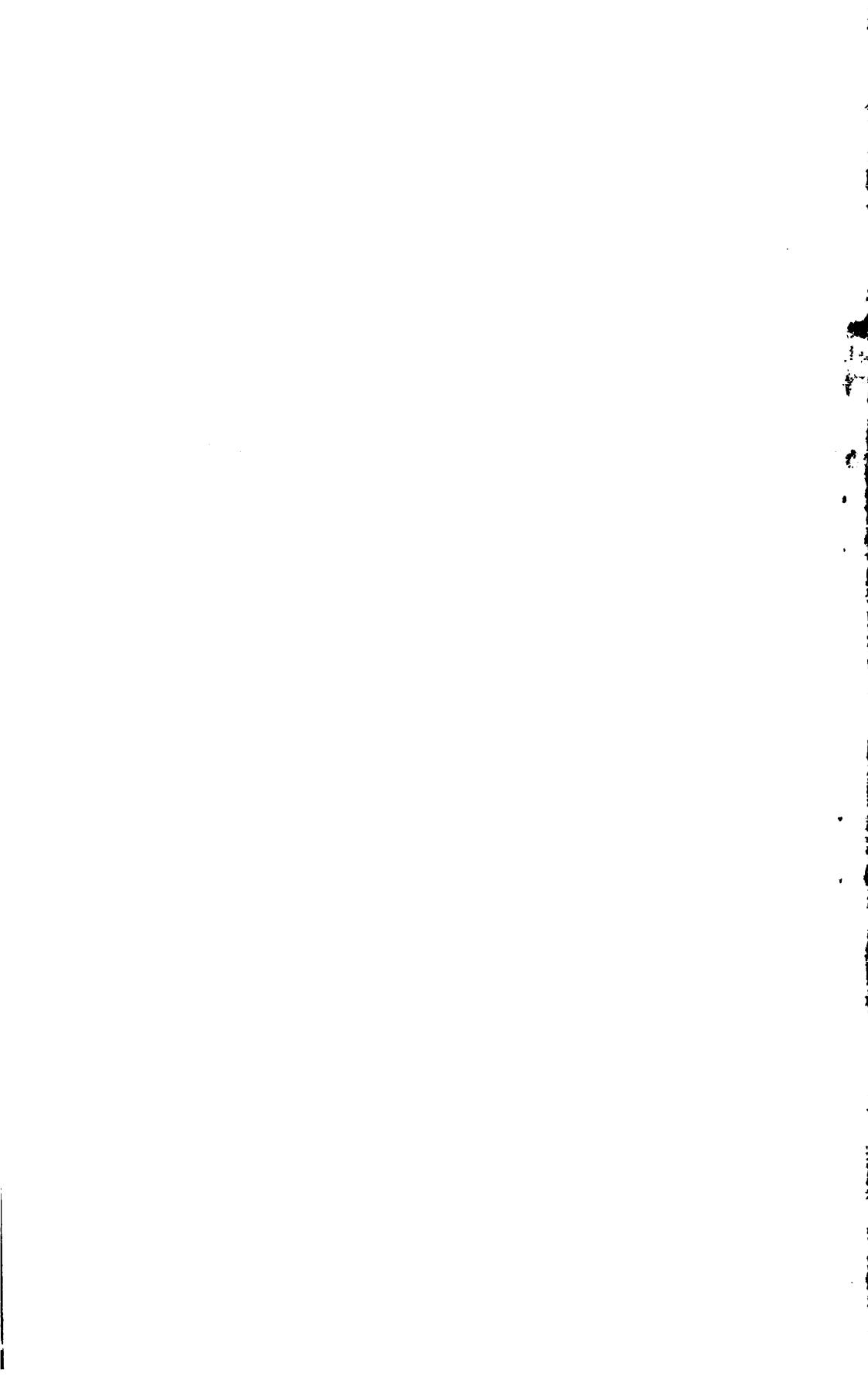
Bd. 1874.



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THE
OCTAVE STAFF;
DIATONIC AND CHROMATIC;
REDUCING THE DIFFERENT STAVES TO ONE,
FURNISHING AN EXCLUSIVE PLACE FOR EACH TONE,
WITHOUT FLATS OR SHARPS.

BY
F. A. ADAMS, A.M.

NEW YORK:
PUBLISHED BY D. APPLETON & CO.
1851.

The difficulty of learning to read music is increased by the different placing of the letters on the two staves. To say that this diversity is necessary, is a mere assumption. It is certainly very inconvenient, for it compels the pupil to learn two sets of letters instead of one. Possibly it is no necessity, but has remained hitherto an incumbrance on our musical notation, only because there has been no sufficient effort to get rid of it.

The present system is also encumbered by the use of double sharps and double flats. This feature is very embarrassing to the student of instrumental music.

We might add that the use of the treble clef for the tenor staff is a source of constant confusion in the minds of learners. This error can be thoroughly corrected only by very careful instruction and considerable practice on this specific point. The ordinary instruction of classes in singing schools leaves the minds of pupils still confused. We would not imply that the proper explanations are not given, but the false impression, continually recurring to the eye, obliterates the remembrance of the correct statement, and the confusion holds its old place in the mind.

In proposing a change in our musical notation, it is important that the method proposed should be such as to secure the greatest improvement with the smallest possible means. A partial remedy, applicable to only one kind of music, or remedying only one or two of the existing difficulties, will pretty surely prove unacceptable.

The proposed method must also be simple. We have already too many marks, and one of the first necessities in proposing a new method is to diminish, if possible, the number of characters employed.

The new Musical Staff, here offered for examination, facilitates the reading and the writing of music in the following respects :

It furnishes a distinct place for each tone in the chromatic scale, and this place is never used for any other tone ; the notation is therefore perfectly definite.

It dispenses entirely with flats, sharps and naturals, whether in the signature or as accidentals.

It suggests to the eye the exact interval between any two tones, so that it is seen at once whether a third is a major or a minor third, without any reference to signature or key ; and the same of other intervals. This applies also to notes in the different parts, as Base and Tenor.

The distance suggested by two such notes is not, as in the common mode, a matter of sight combined with an act of reflection, but of sight

merely. What is there suggested to the eye is not subject to a modification by flats or sharps at the beginning of the staff, for there are no such marks.

There is, virtually, only one staff to be learned, for the different staves are but repetitions of the first, at successive octave distances,—each staff containing the notes for just one octave.

The letters on the staff are so placed that the pupil, when once told their position, will never lose the knowledge of it.

The system is equally applicable to vocal and instrumental music. The most complicated chromatic passage is read on the Key Board just as easily as the plainest melody.

This method requires the introduction of no new characters. The changes by which the above advantages are gained are two:

First, a new ruling of the staff.

Second, a new placing of the letters on the lines.

THE NEW STAFF.

The staff for the four parts of vocal music consists of three groups of lines. We begin with the lowest. [See Ex. I.*] The staff begins with A—as low within one degree as the lowest line in the ordinary Base staff.

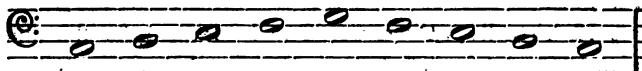
The letters are placed on the lines only. The space between the lines suggests the interval between the tones; the space between B and C, and that between E and F, being half as great as that between A and B. We may call the larger distance a space; the smaller, a half space. Thus the distance between the lines suggests instantly, and with unfailing truth, the interval in the tones. The interval of a step, or large second, is always expressed by notes distant from each other a space; the interval of a small second, by a half space.

A short line (—), above the group here presented, connects this group with the one above.

The following example will illustrate the use of this group in the writing of a musical phrase.

* All references by the Roman numerals are to examples commencing at page 13.

THE COMMON NOTATION.



For the same phrase on the new staff see Ex. II.

In the common notation there is nothing to suggest to the eye that the interval between the first and second tone is a large second; on the new staff that fact is suggested by the full space separating the notes for those tones. So of any two tones not immediately consecutive, as from **c** to **e**; on the new staff the interval is seen to be a large third, for the notes are separated by two full spaces. In the common mode we *reflect* that the interval is a large third, for we *remember* that from **c** to **e** is a large third, although, for all that appears to the eye, it might be a small third just as well.

The middle group is a repetition of the first, an octave higher. Written over the first, with the short lines, the two groups furnish a range of two octaves, from **G** to **g**, the combined compass of male voices, Base and Tenor, in choral music. This group also furnishes the place for the lower tones of the female voice. Before introducing the third group, we will combine the lower and middle ones, and write the range of notes from **c** to **e**. See Ex. III.

The lines for the letter A are drawn heavier than the others, so as to present each group more distinctly by itself.

The tonic relation which the consecutive tones hold to each other here stands revealed to the eye. The fact, having been once learned, is anew pictured to the sight, every time the pupil has occasion to recall it in reading music. Let it not be supposed that we would advocate the attempt to teach the tonic relation of sounds in the first instance by any representation in space. The distinction of tones in pitch has nothing to do with space, and should be communicated through the ear alone. But when we attempt to write music, we necessarily use associations of space. Nature herself dictates such associations, (for the universal consent of man is the voice of Nature,) and in accepting these associations, it is surely well to make the most of them—to have their utterances always helpful, never ambiguous or equivocal.

The line for the letter **G** may be ruled in full, but by leaving the space, to be occupied by short lines, whenever notes in the music call

for them, it becomes easier to keep the different groups distinct. We now add the upper group to the two preceding, furnishing the full range of tones for the four parts of vocal music. See Ex. IV.

In this form of the staff, that is, when the three groups are written, there is no longer any necessity for marking the place of any letter, for the heavy line in the lower group is always A, in the middle group a, in the upper group a' . These groups never change their relative position; nor do the lines in a group ever change their relative distance from each other. Each line is the fixed place for the natural sound of one of the letters, and is never used for any other sound.

In instrumental music, a passage which ranges considerably above or below the staff may be written one or two octaves above or below where it is to be played, and be marked accordingly.

THE USE OF THE SPACES.

The spaces are for the letters when flattened or sharpened; thus the space between c and d is for the tone between c and d—that is, c sharp or d flat. The letters whose tones are a large *second* apart in sound, are separated on the staff by a full space, admitting a note for the intermediate tone whenever it is required; the letters whose tones are only a small *second* apart, are separated on the staff by only a *half space*. Thus from G to A is a full space, furnishing a place for the intermediate tone, G sharp or A flat. As there is no musical tone between B and c, these lines are separated by only a half space, not admitting a note; the same also with e and f. See Ex. V.

As every tone in the chromatic scale—that is, every possible tone in music—has its own fixed place in this scale, it is easily seen what is necessary to write a tune in any given key. It is simply to write the note for each tone in its appropriate place, and the work is done.

To read a tune it is only necessary to see the place of each note successively, and its tone is known, for the place of itself determines the tone.

For illustration we write the Diatonic Major Scale in several different keys. See Ex. VI. to XI.

The scale of F is, tone for tone, a larger second, or a step, lower than that of G. In the writing, the notes stand, note for note, just one space lower.

The scale of A flat is, tone for tone, a small second or half step lower than the scale of A. On comparing the writing of the two, each note is seen to be just half a space lower than the corresponding note in the key of A.

It is not necessary to give more examples of the scales. From an examination of those given above, it will be seen that the places of the small intervals are in every instance suggested to the eye by the spaces separating the notes. The notes for the small second are always separated by a half space, as the distance from the **b** line to the **c** line, or what is just equal to this, the distance from a line to the middle of the whole space above, or below it.

The interval of a large second is always suggested by a whole space, or its equal, two half spaces, such as from the **a** line to the **b** line, or from **e** to **f** sharp—the middle point between **f** and **g**.

With this notation the pupil, having learned the character of the Diatonic scale, can enter at once, and with confidence, on the reading of music. He has no new rules to learn. He sees his way before him, and goes forward with a firm step.

The presence to the eye of spaces which are accurately suggestive of tonic intervals will prove a constant stimulus to his attention—a mental accompaniment, if we may so say, to every tone he sings.

The definite suggestions furnished in this staff will not only stimulate the learner's attention; they will awaken confidence in connection with his efforts. The sight of a given space between two notes, suggestive of a given interval in the tones, will not indeed teach him how to sing that interval; but having already learned how to sing the intervals, the space between two notes shows him beyond a doubt what interval he is to sing; thus at once inciting him in the effort, and assuring him of his success when it has been rightly made.

The examples marked XII. and XIII. are short passages from vocal exercises. They are presented in both forms to show the definiteness of the new scale in suggesting the melodic progression.

Example XIV. is a portion of a vocal exercise in the chromatic scale. It is written in both modes, and shows the simplicity and definiteness of the new scale in its application to chromatic passages.

Example XV. is a succession of runs ascending and descending through the Diatonics one, two, three, four, five, elevating the whole series a semitonic interval, or small second, at each successive run. This

direction is given in the common notation by changing the signature five times. In the new staff no signature is needed.

Example XVI. is a part of a lesson in vocal practice taken from Lablache, presented in both modes of writing.

In example XVII. we have illustrations in Harmony taken from Weber's Theory of musical composition ; and below it, the same harmonies written on the new staff.

THE COMPASS OR EXTENT OF THE NEW STAFF.

The staff with one added line above and one below embraces a range of three octaves, a little less than the combined compass of the Base and Treble Staves in the common notation. It should be said also that the addition of short lines does not enlarge the compass of the staff as rapidly as in the common notation, inasmuch as two consecutive lines never embrace more than a large second, while in the common notation they may embrace a major third. The question then naturally arises, is this staff extensive enough for instrumental music ?

First, it is obvious there is in the theory no limit to its extent, nor is there anything to forbid another group being written above or below the groups for vocal music. This would extend the range of the eye, but it is yet to be determined whether this would not be an advantage rather than a disadvantage, by reason of the greater clearness of view which it would give. The first impressions of a musician trained to read music in the present mode of writing cannot be regarded as decisive on this point. He has been educated to overcome the difficulty arising from the confused and crowded position of the notes as they are now written, and to regard the narrow space which the eye traverses as a sort of necessary condition in the rapid reading of music. But this is a mere assumption. The capacity of the eye in this respect is not known, for the power of the eye is not cultivated in this direction. It is by no means certain that an increased distance of the notes, if it were once settled as the usual mode, would not prove an advantage to the eye, more than compensating by the greater clearness of view for any apparent inconvenience arising from the greater distance which the eye must traverse.

But there are two particulars which will give a special advantage in the reading, for the instrument, of high or low passages on the new

staff. One is, that the lines are not all at the same distance apart, and this is of itself a hint as to what the letters are when the performer is looking far up or far down among added lines; whereas in the common notation there is no distinction in the spaces. The lines are at the same unvarying distance from each other. There is no way of telling what letter stands on a short line but by counting from the staff.

But in the new staff, besides the position of the lines **b**, **c**, and **e**, **f**, there is another important sign. The **a** line is always heavy, whether it be long or short. This will always show instantly where **a** is, and the two lines above are of course for **b** and **c**; the other two lines, separated by a half space, are of course **e** and **f**. Thus the performer will always find himself at home in the short lines, however high or low he may go. This heavy line for **a** will always be a landmark, whether for the learner, or for the proficient. It is as if one were employed in traveling up and down a long, dark flight of stairs, and were required always to keep count of his steps; and to aid himself in this, should resort to the device of placing a lighted lamp on every tenth step: how much more easily would he then keep his count, or recover it, if for a moment he should lose it!

It is evident also that the new staff admits the same resource as the common notation, whenever a passage runs too high or too low to be written in loco. Let it be written an octave above or below, and marked accordingly. As a line drawn over a passage denotes that it is to be played an octave higher than it is written, so in the case of very large skips, a short line over a single note may denote that it is to be played an octave higher than it is written. In the same way a short line under any note may designate that it is to be played an octave lower than it is written. This is simply applying the accepted method of marking whole passages to the marking of single notes. Sometimes skips occur of such great extent that this mode of marking would be a manifest convenience in the common notation. It comports exactly also with the scientific marking of musical letters. Any letter with a score drawn over it designates a tone an octave higher than it would if it were not marked; and if underscored it denotes a tone an octave lower than it would if not underscored.

THE APPLICATION OF THE STAFF TO MUSIC IN FOUR PARTS.

The question will naturally arise whether the music for four vocal parts will not appear crowded when written in the three groups. This question should be fairly considered. The organic relation of the groups to each other renders it natural that they should be presented together, until the habit of reading music is formed. After this object has been secured, it may be most convenient to write the Base and Tenor on the A and a groups; and the Alto and Treble on the \bar{a} and \bar{A} groups—thus writing the middle group twice. In this form we present Old Hundred in the key of G, in example XVIII.

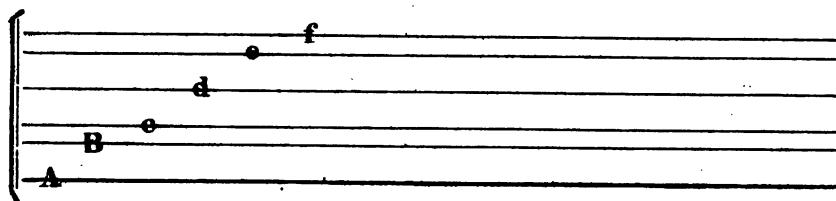
Should it be desirable to retain the three groups in their strict organic connection, allowing no line or space to be repeated, the distinction of the notes for the different parts might be made plain by using notes of different sizes, one size for the Base and Alto, another for the Tenor and Treble. In this form Old Hundred is given in example XIX.

Finally, in example XX. we have the tune Marlow without either the device of small notes, or the separation of the staff into parts; but simply by turning the stems of the notes in the lower parts down, and those for the higher parts up, whenever there is any liability of mistake. Experience will show which of these arrangements will be most distinct and pleasing. The apparent difficulty of reading four parts in the three groups will disappear with a little practice. The three groups, with the intermediate short lines, contain twenty lines, just as many as there are in the four groups in the common notation, where each part is written on a separate staff. We have the testimony of the most experienced instructors that the harmony may be easily read from the four staves in Church music, if the learner is accustomed to this mode from the first: certainly this task will be much easier on the new staff, in which the groups are in strict organic connection, where no inversion is permitted, and no line or space is ever repeated. If, for the greater distinctness of the parts, the groups are ever separated, as in the first example of Old Hundred, and this separation is found to occasion any inconvenience to the organist, then the harmony may be figured as in the common notation.

Since preparing the preceding pages for the press, a professional musician has presented a passage of widely dispersed music for the Piano, with the request that it might be written on the New Staff, as a test of its capabilities for music of this kind. This passage is given in Example XXI; first in the new staff, and then in the common notation. The common notation requires the insertion of a clef nine times, besides signature and accidentals. In the new staff neither clef nor accidentals are required. The notes are all written in their place, except the higher ones in the last two measures; which are written an octave below, and marked accordingly by a short score placed over each note.

EXAMPLES.

I.

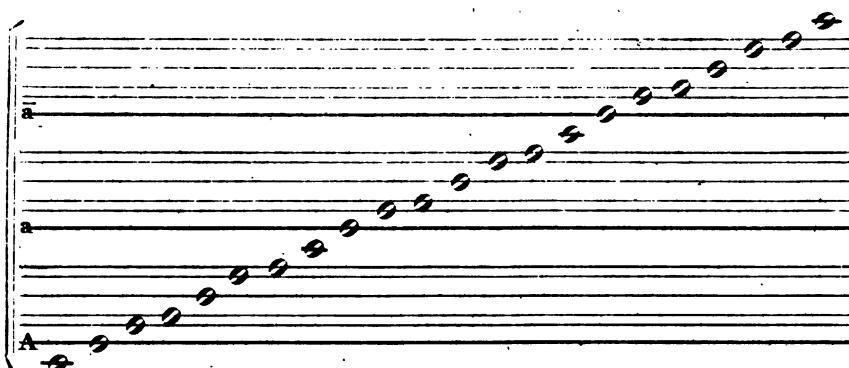


II.



III.





<u>e</u>		
<u>b</u>		
<u>a</u>	a sharp	b flat
<u>g</u>	g sharp	a flat
<u>f</u>	f sharp	g flat
<u>e</u>		
<u>d</u>	d sharp	e flat
<u>c</u>	c sharp	d flat
<u>e</u>		

The chromatic scale from c to \bar{c} .



The same in the common notation.



VI.

Key of G.



VII.

Key of F.

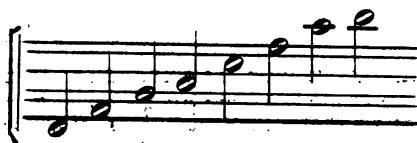


VIII.

Key of A.



IX.

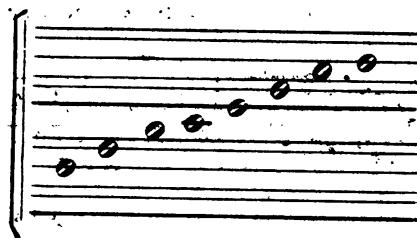
Key of A \flat .

X.

Key of B \flat .

XI.

Key of D.



XII.

The New staff.



The same in the common notation.



The New Staff.



The Common Notation.



The New Staff.

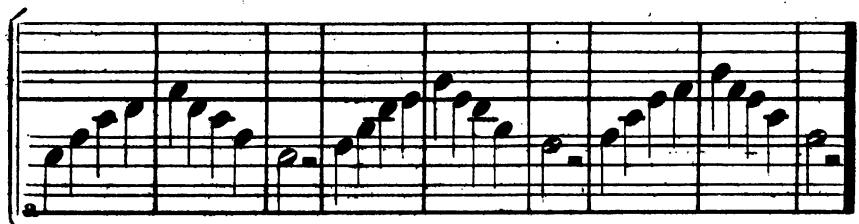


The Common Notation.



XV.

The New Staff.



The Common Notation.

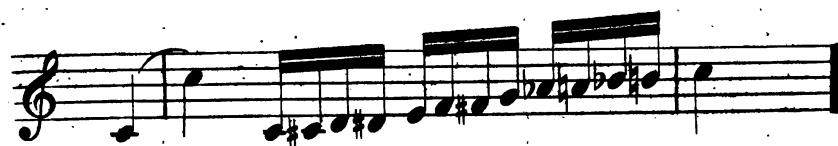


XVI.

The New Staff.



The Common Notation.

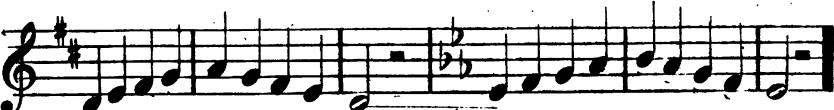
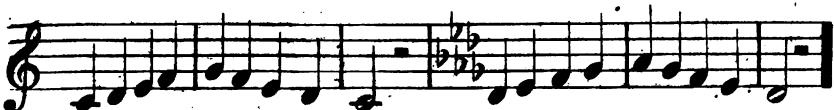


XV.

The New Staff.



The Common Notation.

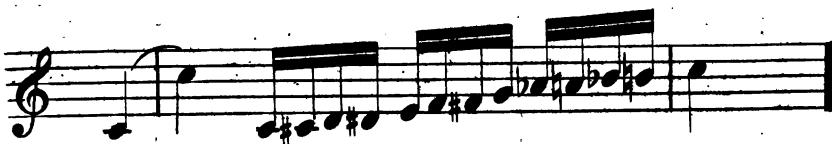


XVI.

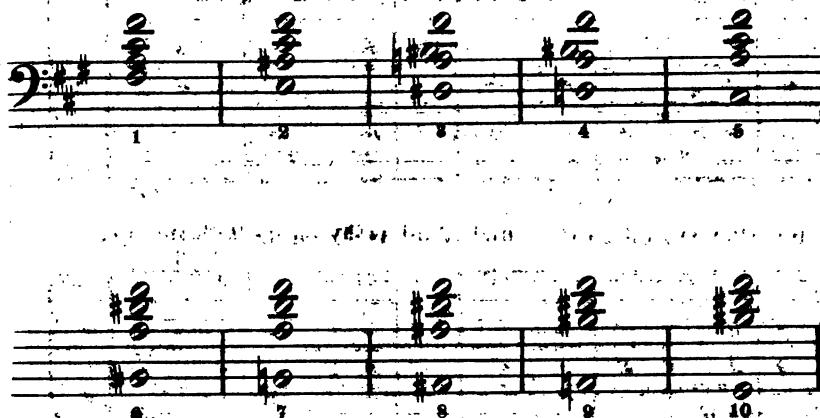
The New Staff.



The Common Notation.



The Common Notation.



The New Staff.



XVIII. OLD HUNDRED.

Key of G.

Be thou, O God! exalted high: And as thy glory fills the sky, So

A musical score for two voices, Treble and Bass. The Treble voice is in the upper staff, and the Bass voice is in the lower staff. The score shows measures 4 and 5. In measure 4, the Treble voice has a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the Bass voice provides harmonic support with sustained notes and eighth-note chords. A fermata is placed over the bass note at the end of measure 4. In measure 5, the bass note continues, and a bassoon entry is indicated with a bassoon clef and a bassoon symbol.

let it be on earth display'd, Till thou art here as there obey'd.

XIX.

OLD HUNDRED,

In the key of G.



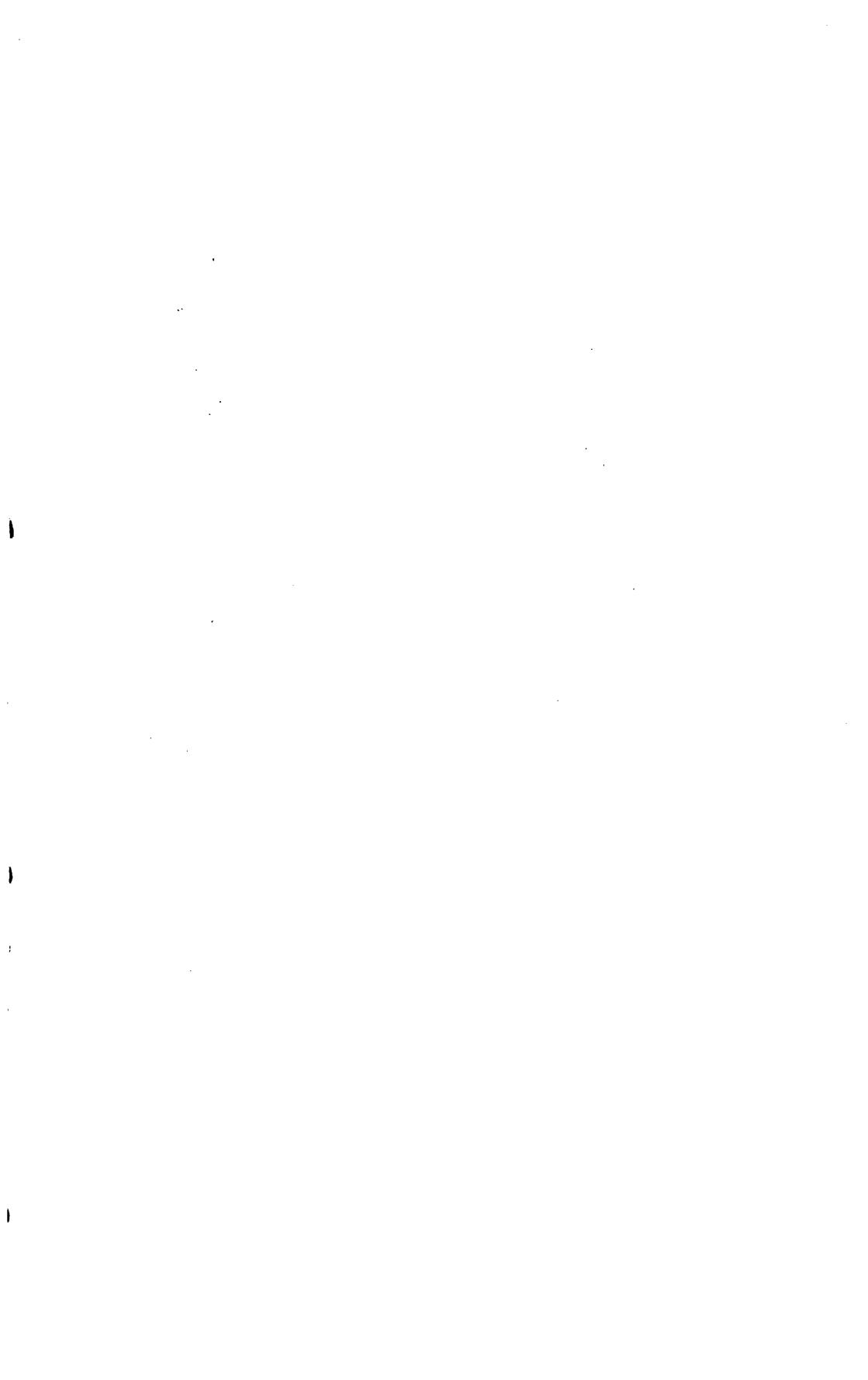
XX.

MARLOW,

In the key of F.



A page of musical notation for two staves, labeled XXI. The left staff is in 2/4 time and the right staff is in 3/4 time. Both staves use a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The notation includes various note heads, stems, and bar lines, with some notes grouped by vertical lines.





Mus 290.120

The octave staff, diatonic and chro

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